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An earnest Persuasive to a manly Defence
of our happy Constitution in CHURCH
and STATE:

A
S E R M O N,

Preached in the
Parish-Church of *Kildwick-Piercy*,

In the County of *YORK*,

On *FRIDAY*, February 17, 1758,

Being the Day appointed for a

G E N E R A L F A S T.

By *JOHN FOX, B. A.*
Minister of that Parish.

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TO

The Very Reverend and Right Worshipful

JOHN FOUNTAYNE, D. D.

Dean of YORK,

And Prebendary of SARUM,

This S E R M O N is,

With great Respect, and as a publick Testimony of Gratitude for repeated Favours, humbly inscribed, by

His most obliged

Humble Servant

J. F O X.

TO
The Very Reverend and Right Worshipful

JOHN FOUNTAINE, D.D.

Dean of T. O. K.

and Archbishop of S. A. R. U. M.

is

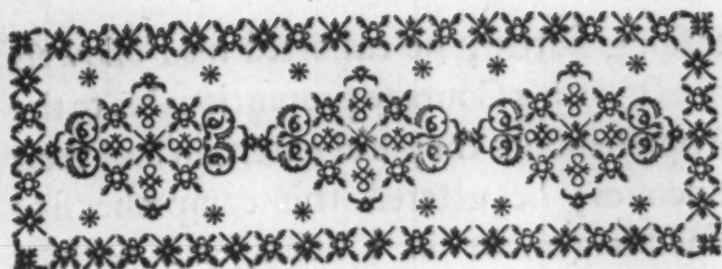


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J. F. O. X.



A

SERMON, &c.

II SAMUEL X. 12.

Be of good Courage, and let us play the Men for our People, and for the Cities of our GOD: And the LORD do that which seemeth him good.

N these Words *Joab*, the Captain of *David's* Host, addresses himself to his Army, drawn up in Line of Battle, and just on the Point of Engagement. While the *Israelites* were struck with Terror and Consternation at the numerous Forces with which they saw themselves surrounded; *Joab*, like an expert Commander, instead of being daunted or dishearten'd at the Difficulties that threaten'd, represented their Danger as a Motive for redoubling their Efforts in the en-

ensuing Battle; he exhorted his Followers to act with a Courage proportionable to the Apprehensions they had entertain'd of their Enemies; he uttered this comprehensive Encouragement in a Voice, and with a Countenance, that inspir'd all, who heard and beheld him, with the like heroic Sentiments and Magnanimity. This gallant Behaviour, and these earnest Exhortations gained him their desired Effect; for the next Verse informs us, that *the Syrians fled before them*. The Magnanimity of this courageous Warrior, was likewise supported by a firm Reliance on Providence; *the Lord*, says he, *do that which seemeth him good*; that is, If they did their Duty, if they *quitted themselves like Men*, he trusted God's Providence would favour them.

The Conduct of his Majesty the King of *Prussia*, at the Battle of *Rosbach*, bears so strong a Resemblance to this of *Joab's*, that it might almost seem to allude to it: The *Prussians*, like the *Israelites*, were in extraordinary Danger, they were incompass'd with a much superior Number of Forces; yet their glorious Commander, like *Joab*, instead of being discouraged at the Difficulties that threaten'd, harangued Them in
much

much the same Terms as the Words of my Text, *Acquit yourselves like Men, and put your Confidence in G O D.* Which Speech animated his Troops to such a Degree of Courage, that, notwithstanding the Superiority of the Enemy, like the *Syrians*, they fled before him. These are the Effects of *good Courage*. Courage is an Effort of the Mind, by which a Sense of Danger is surmounted.—It looks the larger for the Clouds we see it through.—Men are not despicable by their Fate, but by their Manner of supporting it.—The Lion has more Majesty in his Chains, than when in the Forest.—When Difficulties threaten, the Hero's Mind swells in Proportion to the menaced Danger.—In like Manner, at this critical Juncture, after the Example of these two illustrious Heroes, we should let our honest Zeal for our happy Constitution rise in Proportion to the Violence with which it is attacked. When such an avowed Effort is made, to bereave us of every Thing that is most dear and valuable to us, no Order of Men can reckon themselves unconcerned; every Individual ought to stand by the present Establishment with his Discourse, with his Pen, and with his Sword, and to maintain his Happiness,

piness and his Birthright to the utmost. Is this a Time, then, for us of the Clergy, who have devoted ourselves to the Service of God, to be wanting in *our* Duty? No, no, let us be true to our Profession, and give *charitable* Pain: Tell Men of their Danger, “whether they will hear, or whether they will or bear;” speak to their Hearts and Consciences with such Plainness as becomes the Ministers of the Gospel; exhort them in this Time of publick Danger, to *be of good Courage, and to play the Men*. Vouchsafe, therefore, to hear with Candour, and judge with Impartiality, of what I shall say upon a Subject with which our publick and private Happiness is so closely connected. The Text has, in general, an easy and obvious Sense, and naturally suggests the three following Particulars for the ensuing Discourse.

I. The Interests we have at Stake, *Our People and the Cities of our GOD*.

II. The Spirit which we ought to exert in the Defence of them, *Be of good Courage, and let us play the Men*.

III. The

III. The entire Resignation which we ought to exercise to the Dispensations of Providence. *The LORD do that which seemeth him good.*

I. The Interests we have at Stake, *Our People and the Cities of our GOD*; or, in other Words, our Religious and Civil Rights: Motives surely which must animate every *true Briton* to become a Champion in so glorious a Cause.

The Wisdom of a Nation discovers itself in nothing so much as in the happy Constitution of its Government, and the Goodness of its Laws. Let, therefore, our present Condition, and, if our Enemies Designs should succeed, what is likely to be our future one, be compared, and let any considering Person judge of the Inequality.—We now, blessed be GOD, enjoy a *King*, whose chief and constant Aim is the Safety and Felicity of all his People; the many Years happy Experience of whose Conduct has been such as to render him deservedly the Darling of his Subjects. Whereas, it would be impossible for Us *Protestants* to live easy under a *Papish* King; his very Principles oblige him to persecute the Friends of
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Liberty,

Liberty, and the Professors of our true Religion; and he knows very well that he ceases to be religious, when he ceases to be a Persecutor.—We enjoy a *Religion*, the most heavenly the World was ever blessed with; a Religion every Way worthy of the Divine Dispensation, being calculated to promote the general Good of Mankind, both in this Life and in the next. Whereas, wherever the malignant Spirit of *Pope-ry* becomes predominant, it is destructive both of Religious and Civil Rights; it is a Religion not only contrary to Christianity, but the very Principles of Natural Religion, and even of Humanity itself; for it inculcates into its Professors so much Bigotry, Futility, Rage, and Malice, as to make them think they merit Heaven by the Destruction of Mankind. And how deplorable a Consideration is it, that any People should be so besotted as to imagine they do God Service, when they persecute the Followers of the same Saviour, for their Difference only in their Manner of Worship, with a Cruelty which is fit only for *Demons* to exercise.—We enjoy a *Constitution* where our Kings have Power sufficient to govern us well, and are only restrained in the Exercise of it, from subverting

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ing our Laws, destroying our Liberties, and extirpating our Religion. A Constitution, wherein the meanest Subject is under the Protection of the Laws; no Man, however his Superior, can hurt his Person, his Character, or his Property, with Impunity: Where every one has a Right to reap the Labours of his Hands, and to enjoy the Fruits of his honest Industry; a Right to secure what he has acquired, and to do as he pleases with his own. Whereas, should *France* succeed in her detestable Designs, we should be harrass'd by Oppression, and exposed continually to the Caprice of arbitrary Sway; and what Pleasure could there be to promote the Ends of useful Culture, or what Encouragement for Industry in a Nation, where People have nothing they can properly call their own? Where they are every Moment in Fear of losing what they have earned by the Sweat of their Brow? Where they are held in a State of abject Dependence, and forced to crouch to their Masters for a Morsel of Bread? These are Circumstances which must pall the Flavour of every earthly Blessing, and embitter all the Sweets of Life.—We enjoy as wise and full a Provision for our *Freedom*, as is consistent with

our Welfare. All Men have the free Use of their *Reason* and of the *Holy Scriptures* allowed them; they have the Blessing of Worshipping God in the Way which they think most agreeable to his Word, and to the Dictates of their own Consciences: We have that Security of the Truth of our Religion, and of the Agreeableness of it to the Word of God; that honest Confidence of the Goodness of our Cause, that our Church encourages all her Members to read, enquire, consider, and judge for themselves. Whereas, should this Nation suffer the Misfortune of our Enemies being successful, we must then submit to the unrelenting Rigours of Superstition, and be made a Prey to the wild Sallies of an enthusiastick Zeal.

These, my Brethren, are some, though but a very few Instances, of the inestimable Privileges we enjoy under our present Constitution and auspicious Government. Yet, from this short Contrast, it appears what Reason we have to be a happy, or at least a contented, People. What People *may* be happier than the Subjects of such a State, and the Members of such a Church? What Advantages can we propose from a Change of Government? Or what Exception can we

we have to the present? Even the *Roman Catholicks* themselves cannot reasonably hope for any solid and substantial Benefit by a Change, since they enjoy as free and undisturbed an Exercise of their Religion, as if they had obtain'd a legal Toleration; and all the true Friends of Liberty of Conscience wish them the Continuance of it, as long as they behave like good and dutiful Subjects in their Civil Capacity. Such, then, being the dreadful Consequences that must necessarily follow the Neglect of so great a Concern, so important a Duty, let us proceed to consider,

II. The Spirit with which we ought to defend ourselves against the Enemies of our Constitution, *Let us be of good Courage, and play the Men*; that is, Let us act like Men sensible of the Blessings we enjoy, and determin'd to preserve those Blessings to ourselves and our Posterity.

The Love of our Country is certainly the most *noble* among those Virtues which grace and elevate human Nature. Nothing among the antient *Greeks* and *Romans* was esteemed a greater Act of Piety than to fight for the Good of the Community; and they

they, who have greatly fallen in so righteous a Cause, are embalm'd with immortal Honours. Nay, the *Roman Fierceness* has been *celebrated* in Men, who not only *condemn'd* their Sons, but stood by, and *saw* them executed, in the most severe and shameful Manner, for the Love and Safety of their Country. And shall the Sons of *Britain* be so basely degenerate, as to give up *the Laws, the Rights, the precious Plan of Power*, which has been transmitted to us, free from the Incumbrances of Slavery and Oppression, by our renowned Forefathers? Wherein had the *Romans* the Advantage over *us*? Are not our Privileges, our Immunities, as great as ever were theirs? Are we not, to all Intents and Purposes, as free a People? Are we not as brave? Do we not equal them in all the Arts and Embellishments of Life? Then, as to our Religion, it is as far beyond theirs, as the Wisdom of God is superior to the Inventions of Men. These are Considerations which must make our Prayers to Heaven, *on this Occasion*, both sincere and fervent for the Continuance of such inestimable Blessings.

Princes,

Princes, whose Authority is absolute, and uncontroul'd by *Privileges, Rights, or Customs*; whose Dominions are vast and populous, and whose Subjects are laborious, hardy, and obedient; such Princes become *dreadful*, as soon as they appear *ambitious*, and exert themselves in Preparations for War. Such is our Situation in regard to the *French*. It is our Misfortune that they are not only the most inveterate, but most formidable of our Enemies, and have the greatest Power as well as the strongest Inclination to ruin us. We do not disturb their Liberties, Laws, or Religion, nor do we endeavour to encroach upon, or invade their Territories; all that we aim at, and wish for, is, that their Tyranny may not overflow, nor their Corruptions infect, the Liberty and Repose of us their Neighbours. What should be the Interest and Duty then of every Individual but to do *his Part* towards frustrating their impious Attempts? *To humble France*, ought to be the ruling Passion of every *Englishman*. The Preservation of our present happy Constitution is a Cause, in which all Degrees of People are equally concerned; a Cause that affects the Poor as much as the Rich, the Low as as well as the High. There is nothing that

that has more frequently contributed to the Ruin of a good Cause, than the inactive Conduct of its Votaries. *Dangers always are strong, if they are weakly resisted.* *Invasions* may be any where made with Success, if the People invaded think they have nothing worth preserving; but they will not be *attempted* against such Advantages as we enjoy, unless the Enemy has, some how or other, a Suspicion that we are not sufficiently upon our Guard.

If, therefore, my Brethren, you have yet in your Hearts any Sentiments of true Religion:—Nay, if you have not Zeal enough for your Religion, yet, if you have any Regard for your Liberty and Property; if you have any Compassion for your Wives and Children; if any Feeling of the Love of your Country; if any Sense of Honour, or even of Interest is left among you; if Cowardice has not entirely possessed your *British* Hearts, *Be of good Courage, and quit you like Men.*

When such a Weight, such a Variety of Motives call upon us to maintain our Ground against the Attacks of *Popery* and arbitrary Power, how insensible must we be to our
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own greatest Happiness, how unworthy of the many Blessings we enjoy, if we do not take Occasion, in this Time of publick Danger, to exert ourselves in the glorious Cause of Liberty? Let us heartily *unite* in a resolute Defence against such an Enemy, and in such a Cause as this; for nothing can so effectually confound the Devices, and disconcert the wicked Attempts of our Foes, as *Unanimity* amongst ourselves. No personal Animositics or private Dissentions should ever interfere with the general Obligations which we owe to our Country. *A Kingdom divided against itself cannot stand.* Our common Enemies are artful and formidable enough to require our *most united* Opposition. If *united*, therefore, at home, we might still defy all Dangers from abroad. What cannot *British Courage* do, under the Direction of *wise Councils* and *vigorous Orders*? Old *England*, however fallen from its antient Greatness, would be able to preserve itself, and its own Cause must ever be invincible. But let us not arrogantly boast ourselves in the Strength of our Fleets and Armies; let us not vainly trust in our own Arm to save us. No; human Means *alone*, be it ever so great, is no sufficient Ground of Confidence. The

wisest of Men assures us, that *the Race is not always to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong*; the most powerful Armies, upon some unexpected Disaster befalling them in the Day of Battle, have been discomfited by an Enemy, whom they have before despised for his inferior Force. We must never forget, therefore,

III. The unfeigned Resignation which we ought to exercise, at all Times, to the unerring Dispensations of Providence. *The LORD do that which seemeth him good.*

What it *will seem good to him to do* with us, when we consider the heavy Sum of our National Wickedness and Ingratitude to him, it must be acknowledged we have great Cause to fear. When we reflect—with what a Torrent of profane Oaths and Curses, Drunkenness and Debaucheries, Injustice and Dishonesty, Vices of all Kinds and Degrees, our Streets and Habitations are over-run! — With what Contempt the glorious Gospel of CHRIST and his Ordinances have been treated! — How little of the *Power* of Religion has been seen in the *Lives* of its Professors! — How much Luxury has spread its bewitching

ing Influence over all Ranks and Conditions of Men! I say, when we reflect upon these heinous Provocations, we have little Reason to expect the further Protection of God, and his Care over us. May not the offended Majesty of Heaven be expected "to visit for such Things?" Shall not his Soul be "avenged on such a Nation as this?" Nations of such a Character may justly expect National Judgments. These Things are commonly the Fore-runners of the Ruin of States, and of the Humiliation that succeeds. When God is irritated against a Kingdom, foreign Wars, oppressive Taxes, Famines, publick Calamities, and imprudent Counsels, are the consequent Punishments and Effects of it. The best human Means of averting *such* heavy Judgments is to turn unto him *in Weeping, Fasting, and Praying*. Among those Humiliations wherewith penitent Sinners ought to prostrate themselves before God, to sue for Mercy, every Person must observe, that *Fasting* has been frequently mentioned as holding a principal Place. Common Reason, unassisted with Revelation, always directed Men to have Recourse to God, and humble themselves before him, in National Calamities, with publick Fasting

and Prayer. We cannot presume to say that any such Behaviour of ours will assure us of God's immediate Favour and Protection: But we know that Repentance and Amendment are appointed by him as the Means whereby every Nation is to obtain Favour and Protection from him; and as *Fasting* is the most effectual Method to bring about Repentance and Amendment, so far it is an Act acceptable and well-pleasing to God.

A *War* is big with too many Evils, not to call upon us in a particular Manner to *fast and pray*. If People had never seen War kindled between neighbouring Nations, they could hardly believe that Men would arm themselves against one another. Nevertheless, Princes are obliged to have Recourse to Arms, for the Maintenance and Support of their Rights: A Misfortune the more deplorable, as it is become necessary: For however just may be our Cause, or prosperous the Event, still War is always attended with such Ravages and Plunderings, such Ruin of Families and Cities; it renders the most beautiful and well-govern'd Countries such a Scene of Desolation and Calamity; it occasions so many Barbarities,

barities, and such a prodigal Waste of human Blood, as must make all, who have any Feeling of Humanity, lament such a cruel Necessity, and such fatal Consequences.

Yet, when not only our Religious and Civil Constitution, our private Liberties and Properties, are endanger'd; but when we perceive that our lawful Rights abroad, and our antient established Commerce, are unjustly infringed or encroached on, it is allowable for us to engage in War. And herein it is manifest, that the present War is not only lawful but necessary too: A King could not give his People a stronger Mark of Zeal and Affection for their Well-being, than by engaging in it, chearfully and vigorously, with a firm Resolution of preserving the Trade, and vindicating the Honour, of the *British* Nation. And as his Majesty, on his Part, is so anxiously solicitous for the Welfare and Safety of his Subjects, we, in Return, ought to be carefully industrious, by all loyal Obedience, to make the Weight of Government (heavy enough at the best) sit light as possible upon his aged Shoulders.

Perhaps

- Perhaps we may think that we are in no
 - Danger of losing our Blessings, because we
 - are in Possession of them. Prosperity has
 - often proved more fatal to this Nation than
 Adversity itself. We are apt to grow in-
 - pious and negligent in the Enjoyment of
 Ease and Plenty; the Heat of Passions cor-
 - rupt our Senses; the Deceitfulness of Riches
 - blinds our Eyes; the Pleasures of Life steal
 - from us our Understandings; and we wil-
 - lingly suffer the meekest Trifle to divert us
 - from the Thoughts of our eternal Interest.
 - This is the Lethargy which, in Time of
 Health and Prosperity, is apt to overcome
 - us. All temporal Judgments are therefore
 - properly of a *medicinal* Nature, and mer-
 - cifully intended for our Benefit. To awa-
 - ken us from this State of Insensibility,
 - God makes Use of Wars, as the most ex-
 - -quisite Poisons enter the Composition of
 - the wholesomest Remedies. How desperate
 - then our *Ills* must be, since we want so
 - -desperate a Remedy! Yet let us look no
 - where else, but in ourselves, for the Cause
 - of those *Ills*. Our past Conduct, our own
 - total Negligence, hath been the Cause of
 - our present Calamities. Our Lusts and
 Follies, our Debauchery and Profaneness,
 - our unhappy Divisions among ourselves,
 are

are worse and more dangerous Enemies than those we fight with abroad.

If therefore we are desirous that God would bestow *his Blessing and Assistance on the Arms of his Majesty by Sea and Land, and restore and perpetuate Peace, Safety, and Prosperity to this Kingdom*, let us speedily reform our Behaviour, and cease to provoke God by the continued Corruption of our Manners, or else the same Divine Providence, which hath hitherto so mercifully and so undeservedly, on our Parts, protected us, can as easily, if he pleases, give us over *a Prey unto our Enemies*. As nothing can really sanctify a *National Fast* but a *National Amendment*, let us resolve, each of us in his *proper Station*, to do what lies in our Power to stem the Torrent of Iniquity which threatens our Ruin. Religion and Loyalty are the only true and certain Supports of any King or Kingdom. The *best Christian* is always the *best Patriot*; his Schemes procure the Alliance and Favour of the King of Kings; he truly serves his Country by being a leading Example of Virtue, and by using his Power to discountenance and punish Vice and Immorality.

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Sensible of the many great Privileges we have long enjoyed, and the Danger to which we are now exposed, let us mourn over our Sins, and the Wickednesses that are daily committed in this Land, which have drawn down these fresh Troubles upon us. Let us pray to Heaven, not for the Destruction of our Enemies, for they are still our Brethren, but for a Reconciliation with them by an honourable and a lasting Peace. Let us, in all Dangers and Necessities, call on the Name of that Supreme Lord, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, *who is a merciful GOD, full of Compassion, Long-suffering, and of great Pity; who spareth when we deserve Punishment*: In short, who neither wants Power nor Inclination to rescue all those who put their Confidence in him.

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To conclude: Let every particular Person do *his* Part towards averting the Judgments of God: Let every Man reform himself and others, as far as his Influence goes: So may we hope for a happy End of our present Troubles, and a speedy Restoration of a long, a glorious, and a lasting Peace.

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